



March 21, 2014

Dear Mission Personnel,

"There you are with that mirror again. I should be used to it by now, but I'm not. Every Lent I come to you, O God, wanting your instant affirmation. Thinking you will be the god I thought I'd tamed. But in the quiet of your room, with never a word of condemnation, you hold up that mirror. I will not say what I see for the seeing needs no language. I will not deny the image nor question the reason for truth. Let the clock on the mantel be sound enough for what passes between us. Your warm embrace when I leave all the promise I need."

This quote from Episcopal Bishop Steven Charleston describes God holding a mirror up to us without condemnation, only the truth of who we are. This quote holds truth for me, as it seems that I often forget who is really in control. I want to tame God, to be the one who takes responsibility for what is to come. Lent provides us all an opportunity for a healthy reality check. Another opportunity to provide God a chance to hold a mirror up so that we can reflect on who we are, and who we want to become. Lent reminds us of our humanity. We are reminded of our flaws, our weaknesses, and that we all are sinners. That, as we often are reminded on Ash Wednesday, we are the created, not the Creator, and that we are made of dust and to dust we will return.

For some, Lent can be a very dark and bleak season, particularly if we only focus on our flaws, weaknesses, and the places where we need to improve. Just like with anything else, without moderation, the negative can overwhelm. That's why I like this quote, it ends with a reminder of God's love and grace, as we are all warmly embraced. Because even though it is good to remember that we aren't the Creator, relying only on ourselves, it is also good to remember that the Creator is still there with us, helping us along, loving, supporting, giving strength when we are tired, beat down, self critical or weak.

Lent can be a time for us to prepare, focus on what is essential, be determined to push away some of the regular distractions, so that we can allow ourselves to be more fully embraced by the Creator. Through this focus and intent we can grow closer to God and be transformed so that we can live more in truth that we are the beloved of God.

My prayer for each of us this Lent is that we might find time to focus on allowing ourselves to be truly embraced by God so that we can be better instruments of God's grace in the world.

In Christ,

*Ben Albers*

